

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health of the Rural District of Plomesgate.

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MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

I beg to submit to you my Twenty-Second Annual Report upon the Sanitary Condition of the Rural District of Plomesgate.

Births.

During the Year 1902 there were registered 369 births, giving a birth rate of 23·3 per thousand inhabitants, which shews a decrease of 1·2 on the previous year.

Deaths.

The deaths registered in the District during the past year numbered 266, which gives the death rate at 16·8 per 1,000 inhabitants; this is 2·6 higher than in 1901, and 1·3 lower than the average for the previous 10 years. The number of deaths of Infants under 1 year of age was 47, being 2 less than in the previous year, and giving a death rate of 127·3 per 1,000 births registered. Of this number 12 were prematurely born; and of the 266 deaths, 113 were over 65 years of age. There were 14 deaths in the Union Workhouse, 11 of which were registered as over 65 years of age.

Deaths from Zymotic Diseases.

The principal zymotic diseases caused 11 deaths during the year, this being 3 more than in 1901. These included 3 from diphtheria, 1 from scarlet fever, 2 from enteric fever, 4 from whooping cough, and 1 from diarrhoea, none of which took place in the Union Workhouse.

Outbreaks of Infectious Disease.

During the year 61 cases of infectious diseases were notified, being an increase of 17 on the previous year, and 15 less than in 1900. There were 25 cases of diphtheria, 22 cases of scarlet fever, 8 cases of enteric fever, 1 case of puerperal fever, and 5 cases of erysipelas.

Small-pox.

No case of small-pox, during the year, occurred in the Rural District of Plomesgate.

Diphtheria.

The 25 cases of diphtheria were in the following parishes:—Framlingham 11, Blaxhall 4, Snape 3, Wickham Market 2, Hacheston 2, and 1 each in Tunstall, Easton and Hazlewood. The outbreak at Framlingham was the most serious that occurred, 5 cases being in 2 adjoining houses where the back yards were in an insanitary state, another case was caused by a blocked drain at a brewery, another by a defective drain, and in the other cases I was unable to trace the origin of the disease. The 4 cases at Blaxhall were at the same house, and were caused by a collection of refuse, vegetable matter and water. There were 3 cases at Snape, all at one house, and I was unable to account for the appearance of the disease. The 2 cases at Wickham Market were caused by defective drains, but I was unable to account for those at Hacheston. The surroundings of the house at Easton probably caused the disease there, and also at Tunstall the disease was caused by the state of a ditch. The case at Hazlewood followed an attack of scarlet fever. Three deaths were registered from this disease during the year.

Scarlet fever.

There were 22 cases of scarlet fever notified, of which number 14 were at Framlingham, 4 at Parham, 2 at Kettleburgh, and 1 at Earl Soham. Seven cases occurred at the Albert Memorial College, at Framlingham, and the remainder at separate houses in various parts of the town, and in neither case could I ascertain with any certainty the source of the disease. The cases at Earl Soham, Parham, and Hazlewood, were undoubtedly imported. I was unable to find the source of the case at Kettleburgh.

Enteric fever. There were 8 cases of enteric fever notified; a case at Earl Soham where the back yard was in a dirty state, and a case at Crettingham, which I attributed to the drinking water; 2 cases at Framlingham, 2 at Cransford, and 1 each at Parham and Monewden, for neither of which could I find any cause.

Erysipelas. At Framlingham 2 cases of erysipelas were notified, and 3 others in separate parishes.

Puerpural fever. There was only 1 case of puerpural fever in the district during the year.

Whooping cough. There were outbreaks of whooping cough in 4 parishes: Butley, Rendham, Sudbourne and Tunstall. The Schools were closed in these parishes. Four deaths occurred from this disease with other affections of the respiratory organs.

Measles. At Earl Soham there was an outbreak of Measles in March, and an outbreak at Snape in November. The Schools were closed in these parishes. No death was attributed to this disease.

Influenza. Cases of Influenza appeared in most parts of the district during the year 1902, but at no time did this disease become very prevalent, being given as the primary cause of death in only 3 cases.

Diarrhœa. The district was very free from diarrhœa during the whole year, only 1 death being attributed to it.

Phthisis. The number of deaths registered from phthisis was 21, an increase of 8 on the preceding year.

Water. For some months the water supply was short, and several wells have been deepened. I have examined 53 samples, 8 of which were unfit for drinking. The water obtained from the pump in Middle Street, Wickham Market, is still unused for drinking by those living in the neighbourhood.

Over-crowding. There were 3 cases of over-crowding reported, which were all abated without legal proceedings.

All the slaughter-houses in the district are kept in good order, and the lodging-house at Framlingham is kept very clean.

I have visited all cases of infectious diseases that have been notified, supplied disinfectants, and given such directions to the occupiers of the houses that would lessen the danger of the disease spreading. A number of improvements have been effected by the Sanitary Inspector during the year, and he is now engaged in making a complete survey of the different parishes by house to house visits. Earth closets have been provided in several cases, and at Framlingham additional houses have been fitted with water closets, and connected with the sewer. Forty-nine privies have been put in order and 3 new ones built, for better accommodation. At 3 mansions, much improved sanitary arrangements have been made. Thirty-two foul drains and ditches have been cleaned, and proper traps have been fixed to them, where necessary. A large number of ponds that supply drinking water have been cleaned out, and in several villages, wells have been cleaned out, and 5 new wells have been sunk. Gipsy vans have been inspected and some dirty families have been induced to keep their houses cleaner. Where disease has appeared, prompt attention has been given and the houses disinfected. In no case during the year has an infectious disease spread to a neighbouring house when the case has been notified.

The Factory and Workshops' Act. The list of Workshops in the Rural District of Plomesgate, not having been supplied to me until late in the year, I was unable to inspect the whole of them, I visited with the Sanitary Inspector, all the more populous places in the district.

The District consists principally of scattered villages, Agriculture being the chief occupation.

The cottage accommodation is fairly good except in a few isolated instances. There is abundance of open space about the dwellings, and the surroundings are in most instances very satisfactory.

The District Council requires that all new houses shall be provided with sufficient privy accommodation, and a good supply of drinking water before occupation takes place.

There are sewage works at Framlingham, and a partial drainage system at Wickham Market and Orford. The rest of the district is supplied with short drains and cesspits which are attended to by the occupiers, as are also the privy vaults and earth pails, (where in use,) when occasion requires. Except in cases where the size of the premises prevents, most of the privies are a good distance from the houses.

House refuse is generally utilised by the occupiers on garden and allotment lands.

The water supply is from wells and ponds and in a few instances from the rivers. The quantity has been somewhat short during the last few years, many of the wells having to be deepened. Advantage has been taken of the short supply in the ponds to clean them out. The quality of the water is fairly good.

The common lodging-house at Framlingham and all slaughter-houses have been visited and found in a very satisfactory state with but a single exception. The dairies of the district have been inspected by the Sanitary Inspector, and found very clean and satisfactory.

Most of the bakehouses have been inspected, and in several of these, alterations were found to be necessary, and which have been recommended to be carried out at an early date.

In a few of the workshops it was found necessary to give instructions as regards cleanliness and the approaches.

Any nuisance discovered by the Sanitary Inspector or myself, is reported to the Sanitary Committee at their next meeting, when instructions are given, which are at once attended to.

All cases of the principal infectious diseases are notified to me, when I at once visit, and give such directions as will tend to prevent the disease spreading, disinfectants are freely supplied and the patients isolated as far as possible in their own houses, there being no isolation hospital in the district. The premises and clothing are disinfected as thoroughly as possible upon the termination of the case, under the supervision or by the Sanitary Inspector.

I append tables of mortality and cases of infectious disease, classified according to age, locality and disease.

I beg to remain, my Lords and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

J. Cordy Keen.
Medical Officer of Health to the Rural District of Plomesgate.

March 9th, 1903.

